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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on a study that attempted to make white female student teachers aware of their racism in order to improve their capacity to teach in a multicultural and antiracist classroom. Despite meaning well, many white student teachers of children of color exhibit racism, for example, in the form of low expectations, resentment, and antipathy toward their students of color. Usually this racism is invisible to the white student teacher. The study, conducted by a teacher educator, uses open interviews, observation, the journals of a group of white female pre-service teachers, and the experience of tutoring an English language learning child of color to qualitatively examine the ways in which white racism and whiteness influence participant beliefs about English language learning children of color. A group of nine white females from a second language acquisition class at a large university volunteered to participate and were interviewed about race, whiteness, and white racism. Findings revealed that all participants were influenced by whiteness and white racism in many ways, some of which proved to be detrimental to the children they tutored. Yet all participants described themselves as nonracist and non-prejudiced. The second part of the study aimed to disrupt this mindset by drawing attention to its connections to whiteness and white racism and by exploring the personal relationship of each participant to these entities. The teacher educator brought attention to the racism heard in the student participants' comments and shared with them the transcripts of the first two interviews. (Contains 80 references.) (BT)

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How Whiteness Frames the Beliefs of White Female Pre-Service Teachers Working with English Language Learners of Color

Sherry Marx

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Introduction

In the United States today, White people make up about 86 percent of both the teacher workforce (Lara, 1994) and the teacher education student population (Ladson-Billings, 1999). With women now accounting for about 72 percent of the teaching population (Súarez-Orozco, 2000), it can safely be said that White women represent the dominant face of American teachers. At the same time, population shifts are radically diversifying the face of the American student population. In the US today, nearly 50 percent of the school-age population is composed of children of color (Lara, 1994), with the population of English language learners increasing faster than "two and a half times the rate of the general student population" (Clair, 1995, p. 189). 2000 Census[1] data tell us that even these numbers likely underrepresent the exploding populations of children of color and English language learners in the US today. The days when White American teachers spent their careers teaching only White, only English-speaking children are becoming relics of the past.

The implications of these shifting school dynamics have been the subject of much study in recent years. Many teacher educators who devote their teaching and research efforts to improving multicultural education and antiracist education for their mostly White education students admit to some pessimism when it comes to the transformation of student beliefs about the children of color, including the English language learners, they will someday teach. Lawrence (1998), for example, found that her students' attitudes and beliefs about racism and racial identity, as measured by Helms' (1990) racial identity model, did not change significantly over the course of one semester devoted to issues of race. Conducting a similar study, Berlak (1999) found that the White students

in the teacher education class she taught resisted and resented the multicultural, antiracist focus of her class. McIntyre's (1997) study of the ways in which White identity, that is, Whiteness, shaped the beliefs, attitudes, and identities of a group of White pre-service teachers likewise found discouraging results. Her participants tended to think of themselves as "White knights" who grew up with "good parents, good values, [and] a good education," while "they saw students of color as not having – as somehow deficient" (p. 121). Sleeter's 1993 study found that practicing teachers have many of the same deficit thoughts and feelings of resentment about the children of color with whom they work. Later, in 1994, she found that the White pre-service teachers in her own teacher education program at the University of Wisconsin-Parkside, Kenosha resented program changes designed to attract more people of color. These students, she discovered, felt that the new policies unfairly "advantaged" people of color over Whites (Sleeter, 1994). Sleeter was stunned by this resentment and considered it evidence of racism and White privilege, two characteristics of Whiteness (Frankenberg, 1993; Helms, 1990; McIntosh, 1988/1995).

Sharing the concerns of Sleeter and other multicultural educators, Haberman and Post (1993, 1998; Haberman, 1988, 1983) suggest that "selection is more important than training" (Haberman & Post, 1998, p. 102) when it comes to shaping successful future teachers for children of color living in poverty. Therefore, they selectively screen applicants to their Metropolitan Milwaukee Teacher Education Program (MMTEP) for certain pre-existing characteristics, including empathy for, and experience with, the economic, social, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds of the children their program serves. Taking the opposite stance, Melnick and Zeichner (1998) maintain that it is the

responsibility of teacher education programs "to help all teachers, novice and experienced, acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and dispositions needed to work effectively with a diverse student population" (p. 88). Like Haberman and Post (1998), Melnick and Zeichner (1998) consider the teacher education program they run, the Urban Education Program (UEP) of the Association of Colleges of the Midwest, to be very successful.

Because few colleges of education in the United States selectively screen applicants for pre-existing personal characteristics as Haberman and Post (1998) do, it can be assumed that most education programs and most teacher educators believe, at least somewhat, in the transformative power of a good teacher education program or, at the very least, a good teacher education class. That is why intervention attempts to help teacher education students become more critically conscious of the racial, ethnic, cultural, and language biases they often bring with them into the classroom continue, even though the findings are not always positive (see, for example Berlak, 1999; Lawrence, 1998; McIntyre, 1997, 2000; Sleeter 1992, 1993, 1994).

As a teacher educator, I have worked with hundreds of sensitive, thoughtful, altruistic future teachers who sincerely love children and who sincerely want to become excellent teachers for all children. These characteristics of most of my students have led me to share the optimism of teacher educators like Melnick and Zeichner (1998) and others that teacher education students from the dominant White culture, who are monolingual in English and "monocultural" (Fuller, 1994) in the sense that they have grown up in largely homogenous areas, can become successful teachers for a wide range of students. However, at the same time, I have witnessed many of the same thoughtful,

loving students reveal prejudices, racism, and low expectations for English language learners and children of color in subtle – and not so subtle – ways (see Marx, 2000, 2001). These negative characteristics have been as consistent and as pervasive as the positive characteristics. Thus, like many teacher educators, I have been torn by the contradictions presented by this situation.

In making sense of these contradictions, I have adopted the views of a few teacher educators (Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994; McIntyre, 1997), many more scholars in the social sciences (e.g., Frankenberg, 1993; Helms, 1990; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1998; McIntosh, 1988/1995; Rains, 1998; Tatum, 1992, 1994, 1999a, 1999b, 2000), and scholars in the area of Critical Race Theory (e.g., Bell, 1992, 1995a, 1995b, 1995c; Delgado 1995a, 1995b, 1995c, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1999), that the White pre-service teachers with whom I have worked are negatively affected by the racism and ethnocentrism that are interwoven into their own White racial identity, that is, their Whiteness. While these negative effects remain invisible to most Whites, they nevertheless become observable when Whites discuss their low expectations, resentment, and even antipathy for the "different" ways and habits of people of color. These effects are particularly devastating when the low expectations, resentment, and antipathy are shared by teachers talking about the children of color they meet every day in their own classrooms.

As a teacher and teacher educator, I have heard these kinds of comments from numerous White teachers and pre-service teachers over the years, nearly always prefaced by the comment, "I'm not racist, but..." Examining this phenomenon through the Critical Race Theory perspective that all Whites in a White-dominated society are

"privileged" by their skin color, and using Tatum's definition of racism as "a system of advantage based on race" (Tatum, 1999, p. 7), I have come to the conclusion that comments such as those above are indicators of the ways in which racism influences White teachers of children of color. Thus, they are indicators of White racism, the racism that Whites both benefit from and perpetuate by maintaining the status quo. The term "White racism" connotes a personal responsibility among Whites for racism and its effects, rather than a more macro sense of hegemony where no one can be named as directly responsible for racial inequity.

With this understanding of racism in mind, I sought, in this study, to draw the attention of my students to their own White racism, racism that was invisible to them. If their racism could be illuminated, I reasoned that they might be able – and even eager – to make changes in the beliefs they constructed about the children of color with whom they worked. Like the teacher educators I mentioned above, I optimistically hoped that the many positive qualities revealed by my students would help them reflect on and mitigate the negative qualities generated, at least in part, by White racism.

The Study

By engaging in open interviews (Lincoln & Guba, 1989), observing, and reading the journals of a group of White female pre-service teachers, and by tutoring an English language learning child of color myself (Henry, 1998), I sought to qualitatively examine the ways in which White racism and Whiteness influenced participant beliefs about English language learning children of color. After mapping this influence, I ventured to intervene in the stated beliefs of participants with the hopes of helping participants become critical of the affects Whiteness and racism had on these beliefs.

Because I had taught, assisted with, and even studied (Marx, 2000) the "Second Language Acquisition" class at a large, selective, research-focused university where I was a graduate student, I chose to study a group of volunteers from this class. Nine White women, ranging in age from 20 to 35, volunteered to participate in this study. All women self-identified as White, including one whose mother was Mexican American and three who also identified themselves as Jewish. Two women were from poor backgrounds and two were from wealthy backgrounds. The other five considered their economic class to be middle-class. Participants were A, B, and C students.

The weightiest requirement for the Second Language Acquisition class was a 10 hour practicum where students tutored an English language learner in a local public school. Because of the location of this university, the great majority of all children tutored were of Mexican origin; most were from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Like most teachers and teacher education students across the country, about 85 percent of my teacher education students were White (Ladson-Billings, 1999; Lara, 1994), most of them were women (Suarez-Orozco, 2000), and most came from middle-class suburban or rural backgrounds (Haberman and Post, 1998). This tutoring practicum was often the first experience many of my students had working closely with a poor child, a child of color, and/or an English language learner. Thus, conversations about the nature of the tutoring experience often opened the door to low expectations, prejudices, and subtle forms of racism, sometimes to the chagrin and confusion of the students (see Marx, 2000). After all, they generally thought of themselves as future teachers with high expectations and tolerance for all children. These contradictions in their own beliefs seemed to weigh on

them at times. Opening of discussion of race, Whiteness, and White racism with a few students, I thought, might be the key to making sense of these contradictions.

The Importance of Trust and Support

Because any discussion of race, White racism, and Whiteness runs the risk of becoming emotional and threatening, I vowed at the beginning of this study that trust, respect, and confidentiality would characterize all conversations with my students/participants. As anyone who has ever opened up a discussion about racism with a group of White people surely knows, "exploring race-related issues is [extremely] difficult and complex" (Howard & Denning del Rosario, 2000, p. 128). Anyone involved in such a discussion can easily become defensive and angry in their efforts to derail the subject at hand (Helms, 1990). Antiracist researchers are not immune from this emotion; many have become visibly frustrated and angry with their participants (e.g., McIntyre, 1997). In assessing this situation, I think it is important to remember that no failsafe language of race and racism presently exists. Therefore, it is easy to make mistakes and to speak "incorrectly" when broaching these issues. Attacking or even expressing frustration with participants who are trying to develop a language of race likely increases their anxiety and encourages them to avoid the topic altogether. When this happens, no progress can be made. Thus, in the conversations about race and racism I initiated with my participants, I tried to create an environment where participants were encouraged to share their true feelings, no matter how "politically incorrect" they seemed to be. In doing this, I shared Tatum's (1992, 1999) perspective that in order to make any progress in the discussion of racism, we must "talk about it" (p. 17). Talking about it, I suggest,

helps all of us begin to develop a more neutral and more useful language with which to discuss these controversial issues in meaningful ways.

After mapping the ways in which Whiteness and White racism influenced the beliefs of the participants in this study, I sought to intervene in these beliefs by gently drawing attention to the racism I heard in their commentary. After the second interview, I gave all participants the transcripts of our first two interviews so they could see for themselves how their subtle racism became much more obvious when it was objectified on paper. In this way, the transcripts helped participants better "see" the racism that was usually invisible to them. The transcripts also worked as a tool that enabled me to direct a participant's attention to comments or beliefs that I considered racist, even if she did not.

This interventive methodology is closely related to cultural therapy, a technique first and most frequently practiced by George and Louise Spindler (see Spindler & Spindler, 1982, 1987, 1990, 1993, 1994; Spindler, 1997, 1999). The goal of cultural therapy is to make visible the usually invisible aspects of one's culture. As Spindler (1999) explains, "The job of the cultural therapist is to discover what the subject does not know and... then to help the subject to understand and reflect on these discoveries" (p. 470). I call the approach I took in this study "critical cultural therapy" because I added a critical, race-oriented focus to the "culture" the Spindlers spend so much of their careers examining. I viewed racism as an inevitable aspect of the dominant White culture that necessarily influenced the beliefs of my participants and myself. My goal as a "critical cultural therapist," then, was to help participants become aware of the ways in which the Whiteness and the racism that were invisible to them influenced their beliefs about, and

their interactions with, the English language learning children of color they tutored, despite their benevolent intentions.

A Note about the Complicating Factor of Whiteness

Throughout this study, my own positionality as a White female enhanced and also obfuscated this research endeavor. The research was enhanced by my ability to relate to the ways in which Whiteness and racism influenced the lives of the White females in this study. At the same time, however, because many of the benefits bestowed on Whites due to our race remain invisible to us (Chennault, 1998; Hartigan, 1997; McIntosh, 1988; Rodriguez, 1998; Giroux, 1998; Proweller, 1998; Scheurich, 1993, 2000; Wildman & Davis, 1997), throughout this study, I sought to become aware of and critical of the influences of Whiteness and racism even while I, myself, was continually influenced by these same entities. As a White person, there was – and is – no way I could wholly step away from its influences. My Whiteness, then, is a certain limitation of this study.

Part I – Mapping Racism

In the first part of this study, I found that all participants were influenced by Whiteness and White racism in many ways, some of which proved to be detrimental to the children they tutored. At the same time, all participants simultaneously described themselves as nonracist and non-prejudiced, two of them even going so far as to describe themselves as antiracist individuals. The ways in which their own racism became evident are outlined below.

The Neutrality of Whiteness and the Markedness of Color

In our first conversations about White identity, it became clear that all participants seemed to think of Whiteness as a "neutral" or "normal" (non)ethnic identity in contrast

to what they saw as the marked ethnicities of people of color. Several participants had trouble describing White identity without describing what they believed it was not: homogenous ethnically, culturally, linguistically, and religiously. Alba (1990), Katz & Ivey (1977), McIntyre (1997), Nakayama & Krizek (1999), Rains (1998), Scheurich (1993), and Tatum (1999) all suggest that most Whites, like the participants in this study, tend to view White identity and White culture as an amalgamation of very different individuals with little else in common but skin color. Because of this understanding of Whiteness, many Whites finds it impossible to name even a few characteristics of Whiteness or White identity. To these Whites, a White ethnic group simply does not exist.

In contrast to this inconclusive view of culture and ethnicity, most Whites tend to view people of color, as belonging to close-knit, homogenous groups linked by shared histories, religions, cultures, skin color, and cuisine (Feagin & Vera 1995; Frankenberg, 1993; 1997). Even when people of color dispute this characterization, as some have done in the Second Language Acquisition class, Whites still tend to believe it. The literature on teacher beliefs emphasizes that long-held beliefs about anything are extremely hard to alter (see Lortie, 1975; Pajares, 1992, 1993). Thus, it is not surprising that a few adamant comments in class about the diversity of a particular ethnic group fall largely on deaf ears. What often happens in situations like this is that Whites become resentful of the perceived cultural richness of a particular ethnic group and even its perceived "privileges." Omi and Winant (1994) and Winant (1997) write that resentment such as this gives evidence for a White "backlash" against the progress of people of color in the United States.

Most of the participants in this study, in fact, revealed more than a small amount of resentment against people of color. Elizabeth, for example, shared that she resented the clearly delineated cultural identities of people of color that she perceived. With an aggravated sigh, she explained that,

> For White people... it's just hard. It's such a big emphasis on fitting in to your group and to your culture and to your ethnicity. But for White people, we are just clumped in one. So, I think White people are just lost. And they don't know where... they fit in.... It just makes me wonder where I fit in. You know? Or where – where – because White people – their groups are religious or... subgroups, like, deaf people have a set culture, gay people have a set culture – or whatever – but, I'm not deaf. I'm not gay. I'm not blind. (Interview No. 2 with Elizabeth)

In all our discussions about people of color, only one participant, Gen, realized the role oppression played in the formation of many of these groups. Most participants, like Elizabeth, did not seem to realize the historical significance of oppression and, instead, thought of cultures of color as unfairly privileged due to their uniqueness in contrast to the blandness or neutrality of Whiteness. By thinking of cultures of color as unfairly privileged in American society, most participants expressed beliefs that they were disadvantaged by their Whiteness, something Winant (1997) writes, "has few precedents in US racial history" (p. 42). Frankenberg (1993) explains that before the present era of colorblind thinking, the privileges of Whiteness were much more obvious in this country. In the times of slavery and Jim Crow laws, for example, denying the advantages of Whiteness would have been preposterous. At the present time, however, the privileges of

Whiteness are discussed so rarely that they have become nearly invisible (McIntosh, 1988). For Whites, it takes a deliberate effort to see the privileges of Whiteness in our lives (Katz & Ivey, 1977; McIntosh, 1988; Tatum, 1999; Terry, 1981). Thus, in their understandings of Whiteness and color, the participants in this study shared views that, I argue, match the beliefs of most White people in this country.

The Association of Color with Deficits

In addition to resenting people of color and believing that cultures of color were exceedingly homogenous, all participants in this study tended to view people of color through a deficit lens. That is, they tended to think of people of color as generally disadvantaged by various aspects of their culture (see Valencia, 1997). Claire, for example, blamed, "their backgrounds, their environment" (Interview No. 2 with Claire) for diverted educational pursuits. Nearly all participants also commented on the deficient nature of their tutee's home language. Michelle, for example, commented that her tutee, Valerie, had an accent that was "just kind of street.... She has the Mexican talk" (Observation of Michelle). Michelle made these comments privately to me after she had just finished loudly praising Valerie for her strong out-loud reading skills.

In addition to culture and language, several participants commented on the deficient intelligence and self-esteem of their students and other people of color they knew. They also made severe judgments about the home lives and families of their tutees, families they had never met. Rachel, for example, shared her belief that her tutees' parents probably did not care about education because the children forgot to turn in homework that she, a once-a-week tutor with an irregular schedule, had once assigned. Never once did she question her own limited authority in assigning homework.

Because participants tended to think about their tutees and people of color in general as having deficits in culture, language, intelligence, esteem, and family life, it is perhaps inevitable that they also tended to view these same people as having a general lack of civility. This notion came through in the fear that highlighted many of their remarks about people of color, the neighborhoods where their tutees attended school, and the neighborhoods where their tutees lived. It also came through when all participants but one shared the importance they placed on having their own future children attend White majority schools. Because deficit thinking is the predominant lens through which White Americans view people of color today (Foley, 1997; Valencia & Solórzano, 1997), it would be the exception, rather than the rule, to think outside of it. Thus, the deficit thoughts shared by participants once again situated them as sharing the beliefs of most White Americans.

The Association of Whiteness with Benevolence and Astuteness

Subtly and not so subtly, the participants in this study also contrasted the deficiencies of color with the inherent goodness of Whiteness. Like the White student teachers who participated in McIntyre's (1997) study of White identity, and the practicing White teachers Delpit (1995) interviewed over the years, these participants believed themselves to be "White knights" (McIntyre, 1997, p. 121) who could greatly benefit the deficient lives of people of color through their own upstanding qualities as role models and saviors. Participants tended to think of themselves as giving, intelligent, civil, loving adults who had the ability to greatly improve the lives of their students, no matter the short period of time (sometimes just 30 minutes) they spent with the children. Several of them thought of their work with children of color as rewarding charity work.

Several participants explained that they did not feel this same type of neediness and reward when they worked with White children of higher economic backgrounds. Many of them emphasized that as tutors and helpers, they did not feel as important and valued in White-majority schools.

Racism and Prejudice: The Eye of the Beholder

All the while participants constructed their tutees as addled by deficits and themselves as blessed with advantages, they maintained their abhorrence of racism. To help illustrate their own nonracist demeanors, many participants vividly described the racism that characterized many of their friends and family members. Several participants also explicitly pointed out what they perceived to be the racism of people of color. This latter characterization added to the resentment they already felt about people of color.

Like most middle-class White Americans, the participants in this study, with exception of Megan, all thought of racism as active, hate-filled acts committed by evil entities such as the Ku Klux Klan or the Aryan Nation. Thus, no matter what they said about the children of color they tutored, they could not and would not self-identify as racist. Tatum (1999) writes that this understanding of racism is typical among American Whites. Much more pervasive, however, is what she calls "passive racism" (p. 11), which she describes as, "the collusion of laughing when a racist joke is told, of letting exclusionary hiring practices go unchallenged, of accepting as appropriate the omissions of people of color from the curriculum, and of avoiding typical race-related issues" (p. 11). Familiar with Tatum's work, Megan had describe racism in much the same way.

The "business as usual" (Tatum, 1999, p. 11) of passive racism is what characterized the racism of the participants in this study and many Second Language

Acquisition students with whom I have worked in the past. This kind of racism seeks to maintain "a system of advantage based on race" (Tatum, 1999, p. 7) through dominant group storytelling (Delgado, 1995c) and maintenance of the status quo. Whites very often participate in this kind of racism unconsciously and without malice because they/we do not think of it as truly racist. However, this passive racism did have tangible effects: Michelle praised her student to her face and then criticized her for being a "street Mexican" behind her back. Rachel talked to the teacher she assisted about one child's "apathetic attitude" (Rachel's Journal Entry No. 4) and another child's rude behavior. The first child spoke very little English and likely did not understand her directives, while the second child constantly said, "I could read this if it were in Spanish," a comment that Rachel interpreted as disrespectful. Similarly, Elizabeth characterized Martin, the child she tutored, as "insecure" and "trying to be something he's not" (Interview No. 1 with Elizabeth) because he read "too quickly." She thought he was trying to impress her. Indeed he was. By coincidence, I also tutored Martin and discovered that he was reading first and second grade books despite his fourth grade reading ability. The tutoring director had mistakenly placed him into a low level and never again monitored his progress. Elizabeth and the tutoring director were both trying to hold Martin back rather than help him move forward. As these examples indicate, this deficit mindset had severe, tangible consequences for the children.

Part II – Intervening in Racism

The second part of this study, then, was an attempt to disrupt this mindset by drawing attention to its connections to Whiteness and White racism and the personal relationship each participant had to these two entities. I did this by gently drawing

attention to the racism I heard in the comments of participants and by sharing with them the transcripts of our first two interviews. While conducting this part of the study, I kept in mind the experience of McIntyre (1997) who found that her White participants continually avoided taking responsibility for their own racism by engaging in what she called "White talk" (p. 45), a circular kind of discourse that constantly pulls attention away from racism and seeks to console those who broach the topic by insisting that they are not racist in any way.

McIntyre's own participants could never get past the White talk that stifled their discussions of racism. Thus, I sought to avoid this quagmire at all costs. The most crucial step in doing this was to meet participants individually rather than in pairs or groups, for, as individuals, they were less able to "collude" (Tatum, 1999) with one other in the generation of the dominant storytelling (Delgado, 1995c) that is White talk (McIntyre, 1997). Whenever they sought to create White solidarity with me, I instead focused the conversation once again on their own White racism. In this way, I helped generate discourse that became the very opposite of McIntyre's (1997) White talk. The talk that emerged was, rather, a race- and responsibility-focused "White discourse on White racism" (Scheurich, 1993).

Participant Reactions – The Case of Elizabeth

The best way to describe this part of study is, I think, to give the example of one participant who seemed to move from strong denials of White racism to a strong desire to mitigate her racism through the practice of a more critical perspective. Elizabeth makes for a good example because she clearly moved through the nine steps of racial consciousness that I was able to outline in this study. Just 20 at the time of this study,

Elizabeth was a sensitive young woman who, like all of her sister participants, greatly loved children, abhorred racism, and thought of herself as a generally tolerant, open-minded person. She was from a wealthy suburb of Dallas and enjoyed the diversity of her university town, although, like seven of her sister participants, she planned to move back to her hometown and teach in schools much like those she attended. All her comments below come from our second interview.

Step 1 – Opening the Floodgates

The first step in this part of the study was to encourage an unrestrained catharsis of emotion from participants. By the time of these discussions, participants and I had gotten to know each other fairly well; we had met once or twice, and we had shared our classroom for four or five weeks. Thus, at this point, participants seemed to feel very comfortable discussing their thoughts and opinions about people of color, English language learners, and their own White identities with me. Encouraging this cathartic, honest emotion was necessary in order to get each participant's feelings "on the table." Once these feelings became visible, they were much easier to analyze and critique.

Step 2 – Hearing or Seeing One's Own Racism in the Torrent

As participants talked freely about their thoughts and their frustrations, those who were very sensitive began to hear the racism that tinted their words. When they spoke freely, the beliefs that rose to the surface sounded much more actively racist than they expected. Elizabeth, for example, heard herself say a few things that most middle-class Americans would likely consider "politically incorrect." Afraid I would get the wrong impression, she paused and emphasized that, although she was frustrated by people of color, "I would be willing to put my personal opinions aside [if] I m going to be teaching

children [of color]. I want to do it the right way." This comment was Elizabeth's attempt to repair her image as a giving, loving person who would certainly benefit the lives of all children, regardless of their race, home language, ethnicity, etc. Satisfied that I now, "knew what she meant," she sought to move on with her diatribe.

Step 3 – Calling Attention to Contradictions

However, as a critical cultural therapist, I could not let Elizabeth move forward with this excuse. If I had done so, I would have been engaging in White talk (McIntyre, 1997) and dismissing the weight of her contradiction. Instead, I gently asked her if she really thought she could put her personal feelings aside. Without hesitating even a moment, she answered, "Yes," and laughingly commented that, "You might think everything I've said is racist. But, you know, I wouldn't call someone a derogatory name or something." Like most of her sister participants, Elizabeth considered her own passive racism (Tatum, 1999) to be without effect and, therefore, entirely innocuous. However, she had just shared some views that were not too far from this more "active" (Tatum, 1999) characterization of racism. To draw her attention to this contradiction, I asked her why I might think everything she said was racist. Collecting her thoughts, she slowly answered that she had described the child she tutored as having a "hard home life" about which he would be too embarrassed to talk. She explained that this was probably a negative, racist expectation on her part because she, herself, would certainly not mind if anyone asked her about her own home life. Moreover, she had never even asked Martin anything about his home life, nor met his parents. Thus, she had no basis for this judgment.

Step 4 – Sighting the Tip of the Iceberg

This admission of low expectations momentarily stunned Elizabeth. She was very surprised at herself and explained that her education classes had taught her to never pre-judge children and to never construct low expectations for them, emphasizing that she "totally" agreed with this philosophy. Nevertheless, she realized this was exactly what she was doing with Martin. Describing her surprise at herself she exclaimed, "I sit here and listen to myself and it's freaking me out!" At this moment, Elizabeth had seen the "tip of the iceberg;" that is, she had just caught a glimpse of the ways in which Whiteness and White racism influenced her own perceptions.

Step 5 – Retreating into the Haven of Denial

Because Elizabeth was so self-critical and self-reflective, I at first thought she would be able to admit her own White racism and the effects it could have on her teaching at this point. However, when I asked her if she could do this, she protested, absolutely horrified, passionately explaining,

> No. Absolutely not. Because, I don't... when I think of someone being racist – all my life – that means you look at someone and you think that they are not as good as you are because of their heritage – and I don't *consciously* do that. You know, I think *racism* is a bad thing. And that's just not the way I was raised – to look at someone and judge them like that. So I wouldn't say – I would never want to admit that I'm racist, but, now that I'm talking about how I – *totally* – Martin – I associated him with hard times and... all that, I see that that is probably racist. You know, and some other things are probably racist, but [sigh] I don't know... I guess I am, subconsciously, but I don't mean to be. You know, I don't not like

someone because of it. You know what I mean? But it *sucks*! Because it makes you feel bad! A bad person. Like, I shouldn't be teaching kids. You know, I'm going to judge them.

As her comments indicate, Elizabeth was able to "hear" the racism in her own words even as she sought to deny it. She realized that even if her racism was not intentional nor even conscious, it could still have an effect on children. Her low expectations of Martin were proof enough of that.

Step 6 – Constructing and Challenging Easy Answers

This realization that she might be influenced by and perpetuating racism despite her best intentions devastated Elizabeth. Thus, she conjured a quick solution that might easily counteract her racism. Specifically, she said,

> I will just have to really be aware, I guess. I just – I don't see myself treating a child in a negative way or judging. I mean, it may be judging, but I would *never* portray it, I don't think. Definitely not on purpose, but...

As a critical cultural therapist, I again called attention to Elizabeth's contradictions. I asked her if her negative perceptions about children like Martin would "come through" in some manner, despite her intentions. She again thought about Martin and admitted that he might get a sense of her distance from him and her low expectations for him. Again, this admission somewhat stunned her. She did not want to hurt a child, purposely or not. So, once more, she sought to skirt the consequences of her racism, contrasting her own more "passive" (Tatum, 1999), more unintentional racism with the "active" (Tatum, 1999), intentional racism of other White teachers. Specifically, she said,

> I think that there are… teachers that are *really* – they don't think that children of color or whatever should be treated the same. They don't think that they are worthwhile for an *education* or whatever. I think *that* is bad. But *I* think that everyone is worthwhile of an education and everyone's worthwhile of, you know... of... so I don't think it would come through... as much, you know? I mean, I would not *ever* do anything to make a child feel bad about themselves or feel different, you know? And if I do, then... huh!

Although Elizabeth kept trying to deny her responsibility for perpetuating racism and the harm this could cause children, she kept a critical ear tuned to her own words. Her final comment, "And if I do, then... huh!" expressed the helplessness she felt coming to the conclusion that she might unintentionally injure children. Even though she did not want to be racist, at this moment, she realized that she might be.

Step 7 – Drawing Attention to the Bigger Picture

Because Elizabeth finally acknowledged the fact that both her good heart and her racism could coexist in her teacher persona, I sought to draw attention to the connection between the micro event of her passive racism (Tatum, 1999) and the macro situation of the challenges children of color and English language learners face in schools all over the United States. This perspective momentarily overwhelmed her. Nervously, she asked me, "So what you are getting at is that minority teachers should teach minority children, right?" Because I do believe that more teachers of color would greatly benefit the field of education, but that many White teachers can learn to become better teachers for children of color (Melnick & Zeichner, 1988), I told her, "Oh no. I'm not saying that." Curious

to know what had generated this question, I asked her, "Why are you saying that?" She answered,

> Because, I just feel like that's what we are getting at. Because, I know that whatever I've said that is racist is not my fault. You know? It's a society thing. Like you said, American culture is racist. It's not like I'm a bad person. I *know* I'm not a bad person. I *know* I have a good heart. I think I have a better heart than a lot of people I see. So, what I am is, I guess, being a product of society or American culture.

This was Elizabeth's last ditch effort to reject the responsibility that was quickly falling on her shoulders. These denials were classic examples of White talk (McIntyre, 1997). However, because she had no sister participants to agree with her on this, her excuses did not hold water. Rather, her defenses started to crumble.

Step 8 – Coming to Terms with Recognition and Responsibility

Although I agreed with Elizabeth that racism is a part of our society, I also asked her that, even if our racism comes from society, "Isn't it still a bad thing, aren't we still responsible for it?" At these questions, she finally capitulated. Very passionately, and very insightfully, she said,

> It's a big deal, but I don't think it's made a big deal because I have *never* even thought about it like this. I don't think people realize – reading all those articles about it – and White people say in class that they know people who are racist. You would think they are racist: They don't like Black people, they want segregation, blah, blah, blah. You hear them, but you don't really think about that

you have the views inside you whether you put them there or not. But as for me, it's a *very* big issue. I mean it is huge. I mean... humongous.

As she finished this statement, Elizabeth started sobbing. As I put my arm around her to comfort her, it seemed to me that she had finally seen the whole picture. Rather than just the "tip of the iceberg," she glimpsed the hulking, colossal entity that is White racism and she began to take some personal responsibility for it. Her comment that, "It's a big deal, but I don't think it's made a big deal," was extremely insightful. Nothing in her home life, her teacher education, her work with children, or her experience with American culture had prepared her to deal with her own racism. Rather, all these aspects of American life had distanced her from it. As she collected herself, she exclaimed, "I never thought I would be crying over racism," realizing, of course, that White Americans almost never respond so passionately to racism in the abstract. Recognizing the racism in one's self, that is, White racism, is what triggers this kind of emotion.

Step 9 – Moving Past the Impotence of White Guilt

Although she had finally seen the White racism that influenced her life, taken responsibility for her own racism, and shifted her gaze from the deficits of children of color to the biases of White teachers, as her sobs and comments indicated, Elizabeth was left in a very vulnerable position after this conversation. She clearly felt very guilty about her own White racism and she had even begun to question her own goodness. After she finished crying, she fearfully asked me, "What do you – what do you think?" She seemed worried that I would think less of her. Scholars in the area of race and ethnic identity tell us that learning to view the world in a more critical, more race-sensitive manner is often a challenging, frightening experience (Helms, 1990; Howard & Denning

del Rosario, 2000; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1998; Rodriguez, 1998). Rodriguez (1998), for example, writes that coming to terms with racism necessarily provokes feelings of "trauma," "unsettlement," and "bafflement" (p. 34). Citing Baldwin (1963), Karp (1981), and J. Katz (1977), Helms (1990, p. 59) adds that coming to terms with the racism aspect of Whiteness provokes "feelings of guilt, depression, helplessness, and anxiety" that exacerbate the negativity associated with White identity. Helms terms this painful first stage of racial realization "disintegration," signifying the collapse of a previous, uncritical, way of looking at the world. It can be horrifying and immobilizing.

However, there is no benefit to becoming immobilized at this point. In Helms' (1990) widely respected model of White racial identity, disintegration is just the second stage – the first stage of true racial awakening. Because disintegration is such a painful phase, many individuals going through it choose to "avoid further contact" (p. 59) with people of color, or look for information that indicates "either racism is not the White person's fault or does not really exist" (p. 59). These strategies are clearly counterproductive to developing an antiracist White identity. Kincheloe and Steinberg (1998, p. 19) add that the goal of critical self reflection about race and Whiteness should not be White guilt, White self-hatred, or simply dominant culture anguish because these constructions are ineffectual and enervating. Rather, they argue that a reconstituted White identity should focus on "unlearning racism" and "encouraging insight into the nature of historical oppression and its contemporary manifestations" (Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1998, p. 19). Helms (1990) agrees, suggesting that there are four more stages of White racial identity development that Whites must go through in order to develop a

White identity that is both positive and antiracist. The disintegration stage is just the beginning.

With all this in mind, when Elizabeth crumbled at the end of our second conversation, I sought to help her move forward. When she asked me, "What do you – what do you think?" I answered that I thought she was going through Helms' (1990) disintegration stage of White racial identity development. I happened to have Helms' book sitting on the table where we talked,[2] so I passed it to Elizabeth and briefly discussed the stages with her. Helms' discussion of White racial identity is systematic and accessible. I thought it would help Elizabeth see that, of course, she was not alone in her feelings. I also thought it might help her keep moving forward in her racial development because it would help her recognize what stage would likely come next. Because this seemed to be such a good idea for Elizabeth, I decided to give Helms' (1990) chapter four, entitled "A Model of White Racial Identity Development" to all participants. Most participants found it a source of comfort and illumination.

Analysis

Of the nine White women who participated in this study, seven moved to a point similar to Elizabeth's. Each of these seven seemed to become critically aware of the ways in which White racism influenced them and some of the ways in which their own White racism influenced the children they tutored. These participants attempted to mitigate the racism that influenced them and their teaching in a number of ways. Elizabeth and Ashley, for example, became very critical of the White-centric reading materials available to the children they tutored and began searches for more diverse materials. Having a different kind of enlightenment, Michelle finally realized the power

imbalance inherent in the missionary-type approach she had used with her tutees. By the end of our semester together, she had shifted her gaze to how the kids she tutored were good role models for her, instead of the other way around.

Although seven participants reached a point about as advanced as Elizabeth's, not all of them started from the same position. Elizabeth had thought of racial differences before this study, but she had never thought of them in a critical manner. Using Helms' (1990) racial identity model, at the beginning of this study, Elizabeth could be situated in the very first stage, "Contact." This stage is characterized by "naïve curiosity about or fear of people of color" (Howard & Denning del Rosario, 2000, p. 132). Ashley and Claire, in contrast, showed more signs evident of Helms' third stage of White identity, "Reintegration," a stage characterized by denial and resentment against people of color. Megan entered the study even further along, more towards the "Immersion/Emersion stage," which is characterized by an acceptance of Whiteness and a search to "replace White and Black myth and stereotypes with accurate information..." (Helms, 1990, p. 62). By the end of this study, these seven participants were all showing signs of Helms' three later stages of White racial identity, Pseudo-Independent, Immersion/Emersion, and Autonomy, stages characterized by racial tolerance and desires to learn more about Whiteness and people of color. This study was not constructed to demonstrate or closely follow Helms model; however, this model proved to be extremely helpful in analyzing the effects of this study on individual participants. Likely because Elizabeth entered this study in the Contact stage, she went through all nine steps to racial illumination that I presented here. Participants such as Megan, who entered this study much further along, had fewer stages through which to move.

At the same time, not all participants progressed this far. Becky continued to deny her racism throughout this study no matter how much attention I drew to it, nor how clearly it came through in her transcripts. Similarly, Amy never named (Freire 1970/2000) her racism or seemed to take responsibility for it, although she did admit that her own "prejudices" might influence the children with whom she worked. It is possible that, with more time, Amy may have shared the conclusions of her sister participants. Becky, however, persistently described racism as "ridiculous" and "silly," something she would "never" feel (Interview No. 3 with Becky). This characterization made it even harder for her to admit her own racism. Another type of intervention may have been more successful for Becky.

The Freireian (1970/2000) dialogues each participant and I shared shaped the study differently for each participant. The steps I presented in this section proved to be a pattern that participants beginning in the Contact stage (Helms, 1990), such as Elizabeth, and ending in Step Nine, "Moving Past the Impotence of White Guilt," seemed to traverse. Is important to note that as early as Step Four, "Sighting the Tip of the Iceberg," participants seemed to be admitting their racism and taking responsibility for it. However, these admissions were consistently followed by denials until participants made their way to Step Eight, "Coming to Terms with Recognition and Responsibility." Antiracist teacher educators and researchers venturing to replicate the steps of this study must be prepared to help participants move through their denial consistently and with sensitivity until they make it all the way to Step Nine.

A Note about the Methodology

The kind of critical cultural therapy presented in this study is almost necessarily emotional and upsetting. It can even be described as psychologically dangerous for participants. I did take the precautions of maintaining a trusting, supportive, and loving interview environment, and I worked with volunteers who could withdraw from the study anytime they chose. However, I was also very lucky that my participants handled this intense emotional and psychological "therapy" so well. It is very possible that the outcomes would be very different with a different critical cultural "therapist" and a different group of participants. Those endeavoring to use a methodology similar to that which I present here must take great caution to ensure that participants are not traumatized by this kind of intervention. While admitting and taking responsibility for one's own racism does provoke feelings of "trauma," (Rodriguez, 1998, p. 34) and fragility, leaving a participant alone with these feelings is irresponsible. It is imperative that those undertaking this kind of work always keep their participants' psychological health and best interests at the forefront of their intervention agenda.

Conclusions

In our dialogues about White racism and racial identity, it became evident to me that all participants abhorred the active racism (Tatum, 1999) they could distinguish in the words and actions of their family members, friends, and other White teachers. They also tended to associate goodness with a lack of active racism, so they tended to think of themselves as very good people in contrast to those who exhibited racism. Through our conversations, however, their own racism slowly emerged into the light of day and, when they finally saw it, most participants were shocked and disappointed with themselves.

No participant who progressed this far in the study felt comfortable living with the racism she found in herself: All of them vowed to change. As Clair said, "The part of me that is racist is just going to have to... go away in order to be a good teacher" (Interview No. 4 with Claire).

Through this study, it became apparent that the first step in becoming a truly antiracist White must be admitting one's own White racism. Once White people, like the participants in this study, sincerely admit their/our own racism and understand its consequences, they/we can move away from denying racism to the much more productive mindset of seeking to do something about it. Through this change in mindset, Whites can turn their/our focus inward, toward the ways in which they/we contribute to disparities in schooling, rather than always outward toward the "deficits" of children, something that I argue is a racist construct (see also Valencia, 1997). By turning our focus inward, we Whites can make immediate changes in our beliefs and behaviors. By doing this, we can begin to make great changes in the world (Freire, 1970/2000). Indeed, our focused dialogues on race and White racism seemed to truly empower participants (Freire, 1970/2000). Using Ashcroft's (1987) definition of empowerment, participants developed a "belief in [their] ability/capability to act with effect" (p. 145). Using McLaren's definition (1989, p. 186), they learned "to critically appropriate knowledge existing outside their immediate experience in order to broaden their understanding of themselves, the world, and the possibilities for transforming the taken for granted assumptions about the way we live." By better understanding their cultural and racial positionality, the power that accompanies this positionality, and the biases this positionality inevitably generated in their beliefs about English language learning

children of color, most of the young women in this study set a course for becoming much better teachers for all the children who will someday populate their classrooms. All Whites can benefit from their example.

In the end, one of the most surprising findings of this study was that participants were eager to talk about the taboo, generally unspoken (Frankenberg, 1993; Rains, 1998) subjects of race, Whiteness, and White racism when discussions were couched in atmospheres of support, comfort, and tolerance for the "politically incorrect." Indeed, several participants shared that they were grateful for these conversations because, although these topics are usually avoided, White pre-service teachers working with English language learners of color for the first time spend a lot of time thinking about them. Without guidance from knowledgeable instructors, they might not know how to constructively deal with their feelings. Our critical cultural therapy sessions enabled participants to reveal and then analyze their honest feelings and frustrations; they also enabled me to guide participants to a critical understanding of what these feelings could mean for the children they tutored.

As teacher educators, we must be brave enough to initiate similar dialogues on race and racism with our students. In addition to bravery, we must also offer research-based knowledge and leadership (Titone, 1998), two attributes crucial for keeping discussions of race and racism focused on the topics at hand, and two attributes our students expect us to bring to explorations of such controversial topics. As Tatum (1992, 1999) suggests, the only way to make any progress with the issues of race and racism is to talk about them. The more we talk about them, the more we can develop a useful,

more neutral language with which to discuss how these entities effect ourselves, our students, and the world (Freire, 1970/2000). Only then can we make changes.

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[1] 2000 Census data are available at: http://www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/cenbr01-1.pdf

[*] During this study, I found it helpful to place books on race and racism, such as Helms' (1990) Black and White Racial Identity: Theory, Research, and Practice and Tatum's (1999) "Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria?" And Other Conversations about Race in areas where my participants and other Second Language Acquisition students could easily see them, such as my desk or dining table. I found that these books, with their provocative titles, often caught the attention of students and participants, and encouraged them to open up discussions about race and racism. The visibility of these books also emitted the message that I was open to talking about these controversial issues.

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